

Supporting excellence in our schools

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phase of a two-year renovation project for a middle school, and the ongoing construction project for additional classroom space at Parker Road. This edition of the *Journal* features articles on each topic.

Assessment and evaluation, now more than ever, are crucial to maintaining the quality of our school district. The article on MCAS speaks to our performance in that area. You should also know that evaluations are being conducted on specific school programs. The preschool and Beal School just completed site visits from their national accrediting association, the high school will have its re-accreditation visit in March, and three of our academic departments are working on self-studies for visiting teams next year. Even the work of the school committee subcommittee on policy (a brief article also included here) is one more way that the district attempts to be thoughtful about its practices. This year alone, there is a new homework policy and a policy on the acceptable use of technology.

The facilities that house and educate our students are the baseline for excellence.

Finally, I am pleased to say that the Shrewsbury Public Schools does place its work in the area of personnel at the top of its priorities. The article on the reception for the teachers who acquired professional status this year speaks to the value that Shrewsbury places on its teaching staff.

Excellence in education is a journey! Please join us on that journey as school volunteers, members of committees, and interested parents who monitor their children's education. Excellence is everybody's work and it cannot be achieved without the support of the entire community. Please do not hesitate to contact me (abent@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us) with your comments and reactions to this edition of the *Shrewsbury School Journal*.

Shrewsbury School

Journal

Communications Committee

The non-profit *Shrewsbury School Journal* is published three times a year and reaches every household in the diverse and growing town of Shrewsbury. It is published by the central office of the Shrewsbury Public Schools with the help and expertise of many citizens. The mission of the *Shrewsbury School Journal* is to provide an accurate source of information about our school system and the town in which we live. We hope to foster a community of continuous learners.

Anthony J. Bent
Superintendent

Judith Evans
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Dawna Alphonse
Project Coordinator

Nancy Hochstein
School Committee Member

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seeing and speaking of the world, and experience in that world.

Carol Ann Tomlinson,
*The Differentiated Classroom:
Responding to the Needs
of All Learners*

Excellent instruction begins with the belief that all children can learn and that instruction must accommodate the varied intelligences, styles, and needs of students in each classroom. We know a great deal today about the learning needs and styles of students. We know that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are inextricably interwoven and that “one size” does not fit all students. We believe that the responsibility of teachers to provide high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment has never been greater. In addition to all that we know about how children learn, we must also respond to the mandates of curriculum frameworks, state and national assessments, and the standards of the community. The responsibility of the local school district is substantial. Teachers must have appropriate school facilities, reasonable class sizes, sufficient resources, and well-designed professional development opportunities in order to meet the goals being set for them and their students.

Finally, the recruitment, supervision and evaluation, and recognition of staff must be at the top of the district's priorities. Hiring processes must include teachers, students, and parents. Candidates to be recommended for employment should have the opportunity to display their skills through demonstration lessons. Ultimately, only those teachers who represent excellence should be awarded professional status and be recognized for attaining that achievement.

High Standards and Expectations

Standards hold the greatest hope for significantly improving student achievement...The debate about whether or not academic achievement is important is over. Ten years ago, you wouldn't have had agreement that academic achievement was the central focus of public education. Today the standards movement has made this a foregone conclusion.

Marge Scherer, *How and Why Standards Can Improve Student Achievement: A Conversation with Robert J. Marzano*

The standards movement has had a significant impact on public schools by establishing high expectations for all students. If education's promise is to provide the skills and knowledge for success in life for all students, high standards ensure that students get what they need. We believe that successful adults must possess specific knowledge in a variety of areas as well as the ability to be independent thinkers, problem solvers, and self-starters.

We believe that success with standards implies linking curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Assessment (based upon learning goals) should guide the design of curriculum and instructional practice, and students should be partners in the learning process. We believe that we must devise learning environments that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and performance and that we must give students clear models of what the standards are. Shrewsbury's commitment to the curriculum review process, its intense analysis of MCAS and other standardized test scores, and its active professional development program, are examples of the district's work in

this area.

Productive Relationships with Parents and the Community

Student learning increases when families and the community work as educational partners at home and in the schools and community. At all grade levels, such involvement provides educators and administrators with a valuable team for supporting student success.

The Parent, Family, and Community Involvement Guide, Massachusetts Department of Education

We believe that parents and the community are integral to the success of our students and school system. We know that the strongest influence on student development comes from the home and that the school and home, working together, is a powerful influence on student achievement. Communication, in fact, is the foundation of a strong partnership. When school and home communicate regularly, healthy working relationships develop and problems can be solved more quickly.

Summary

The five concepts of core values and mission, strong school cultures, instructional excellence, high standards and expectations, and productive relationships with parents and the community encompass our understanding of the attributes of excellence in schools. They also represent several, important discussions that have taken place in the district to manifest our philosophy of continuous improvement. It is our hope that the school and the community will continue to work together using the principles and values expressed here to serve the needs of our children well into the 21st century.

Elementary report card pilot

JUDITH A. EVANS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

For the past two years, district personnel have been working to develop a standards-based report card for Shrewsbury students in grades three through five. This process has included the creation of learning standards, performance rankings, and detailed descriptors and narratives for what this looks like in the classroom.

As we work to develop this new report card, we recognize that it is

important to provide opportunities for teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to share ideas, needs and concerns about grade reporting. Therefore, we have developed a pilot program for 2002-2003 to collect data, evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed report card, and make recommended changes to its format. We plan to fully implement the final version of the standards-based elementary report card in the 2003-2004 school year.

The report card will provide a perfor-

mance ranking for each standard in all content areas. This is an important change from the former system, which gave an "overall grade" for a content area. Report cards will reflect learning expectations by grade level clusters: grades one and two, and grades three through five (with the option to add kindergarten and grade six for 2004-2005).

Special subject area teachers (art, music, health, physical education, and

Report card, see page 3

Average Family Tax Bill: FY02

Community	Average Family Tax Bill (FY02)
Worcester	\$2,401
Shrewsbury	\$2,880
Grafton	\$2,886
West Boylston	\$3,077
Boylston	\$3,434
Northboro	\$4,003
Westboro	\$4,123

School factoids

Shrewsbury residents enjoy a high level of municipal services and a quality school system. As the table indicates below, this is accomplished in a cost-effective manner in comparison to our neighboring communities.